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"AT THE PUBLIC GOOD WE AIM."

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THE CORRUPTED.

BY SAMUEL L. KNAPP.

"In the name of God most merciful—I swear by the sun and its brightness; by the moon when she followeth him; by the day when it showeth its splendor; by the night when it covereth him with darkness; by the earth, and Him whom spreadeth it forth; by the soul, and Him who perfectly formed it, and inspired into the same its faculty of distinguishing, and power of choosing wickedness or piety—that he who hath purified himself shall be happy, and he who has corrupted his soul shall be miserable."—KORAN.

The form and character of the instruction received by an individual, in the course of obtaining an education, more than the amount of information acquired by him, give a tone to the moral and intellectual powers he may possess. Indiscriminate reading brings on as many diseases to the mind as gross and indiscriminate feeding does to the body. There is hardly a mind in society, from the highest to the humblest, that is not more or less influenced by this latitude of indulgence, in coursing at pleasure the fields of literature. It is deplorable to see youths, whose diet is regulated by a wise physician, allowed, in their reading, to ramble over hill and dale, meadow and woodland, to gather flowers for themselves without a guide—often taking the most poisonous of all, allured by the brilliancy of their colors, and at the same time neglecting the salutary and medical ones, being less attractive to their senses. The literature of the age is full of thrilling sentiments, of stirring incidents, of rapturous glow, of unheard-of suffering, and all that sort of machinery to swell the bosom with emotion, and to fill the eye with tears. This inundation of poisonous confectionary is distressing to those who love wholesome food for the body and mind. Intemperance and consumption slays thousands daily, or robs them, at least of the joys of life. Still the world is on the watch against these enemies of the human race; but who thinks of stemming the current of deleterious sentiment which is constantly flowing in upon every mind? It is time that the public mind should be awakened to this subject. If any one will look around him, he will find numerous instances in his view to justify the writer in these remarks.

John Zone, and Sarah his wife, were respectable grocers in a growing city in this country. They were industrious and honest, and of course thrifty. They were blessed with several children of good sound constitutions. Their sons were clever and quiet, and two of their daughters, out of three, plain good girls, and learned readily whatever was taught them; but one of their daughters was pronounced a beauty from her birth. She was a paragon in the cradle. In the mother's imagination, an hundred fairies attended her birth, and more were to superintend her growth. This is a weakness that often attends those otherwise blessed with good sense. Mrs. Zone sought for a lovely name for this little Peri of perfection, and at last fixed upon Helen Hyacinthia Zone. This was generally applauded by all the relatives.—As Hyacinthia grew up, no one was allowed to contradict her, or even to gainsay whatever she did. She broke playthings as she pleased, but all was right. Good Mr. Zone sometimes ventured to ask his wife if she were doing right; but on these occasions he was snubbed up in such a manner that the question was not often repeated. "Go look after Hyacinthia," was the constant direction to the other children until they wished their little sister in heaven. She mastered her alphabet as soon as the other sisters, and, in fact, was forward in learning to read, for she was not destitute of mind or memory. She was about equal to those of her age in school for reading or hand-writing; but the moment she was put to higher branches, she was obstinate, and resorted to tears for an indulgence from her lessons. Her instructor got out of all patience, and insisted that she should learn the multiplication table with the other scholars; but she would not make the attempt.—She returned from school with swollen eyes, and appealed to her mother for protection. The mother said she should not be driven to this odious task; her sisters

had learned it, and that was enough: Hyacinthia should not be crossed in her temper for such a trivial thing as a multiplication table. Mr. Zone insisted that she was capable of committing it to memory, and that she should be made to do it. A violent family quarrel ensued, and Hyacinthia and her mother were conquerors over father and schoolmaster.

The mother thought that her dear daughter should have private tutors, and not be submitted to the degradation of a public school. Mr. Zone, knowing how hard his wife labored, and how much she earned for him every day, could not object, or rather thought it the wisest course not to refuse her request. One instructor after another was hired, and Hyacinthia was not suited; no one seemed to understand her bent of genius but her dear mother, and she could not exactly describe, but felt assured that it was something of a higher order. The sums paid her tutors began to grow severe in the sight of Mr. Zone, and he remonstrated with his wife upon the subject. She acknowledged that some of the masters might have suited, if her daughter Hyacinthia had not such a peculiar temper, or, as she had heard lawyer Danforth say, "was not of such a delicate fibre." She had some slight passion for music, and an old musician, who had spent the good part of a life in managing mothers and daughters, contrived to keep the little uneasy, capricious creature constant at her piano, until she had really caught some idea of music. Hyacinthia had taste in sounds, and soon acquired a tolerable execution on the piano. Now the great secret of her genius was discovered, and was to rival the Sontag and Malibran, and the whole troop of syrens of the opera, from Naples to New York; and it is to be confessed that she did make some improvement, by dint of exertion and the force of flattery. Her mother thought that Hyacinthia had an exquisite taste in dress, but she always appeared gaudy, flaunting, and extravagant. She was never in equable spirits, either melancholy or extatic. Her conversation was offensive to a man of sense. An uncle of hers came to the city to see his brother, and was well received. He was a lawyer in the interior, a sensible man, with an affectionate heart. He was soon at home with all the rest of the family, but Hyacinthia had not determined whether it was genteel or not to be sociable with an uncle from the country. He was disgusted with her on a few minutes' conversation. She quoted all the modern novels and sentimental poetry, thinking it would be quite acceptable to a literary man. In the first place, he could not find out the meaning half the time, and when he did catch a glimpse of it, he considered it as the most wretched affectation in the world, and could not help treating it as such. The mother saw the disgust the lawyer felt at her display, but consoled herself by saying to her husband, "These country folks, if they are ever so smart, have no notion of what the wife of a city gentleman should be. They want somebody to take care of the farm. Lucy or Jane would make good wives for country gentry; but Hyacinthia shall never go into the country."

Lucy and Jane soon had offers of marriage from substantial business men, and were happily settled. Hyacinthia now had the whole attention of her parents. She was dressed like a tragedy queen in the street, and attracted those drones of society who watch hours in the day to see who passes. It was not difficult to get an introduction to her, and it was well known that her mother handed round an excellent glass of wine and fresh house-baked cake. The honest citizen, Mr. Zone, had no small difficulty to eat his dinner in peace, as Hyacinthia's beaux came at one o'clock, as a most fashionable hour to visit. It was a sad business, but it was decided that the family should dine at three o'clock instead of one. They suffered much from this change of hours for dinner; but their daughter's welfare was paramount to all inconveniences. Every evening until a late hour, the parlor was filled by every dandy eit or foreigner in the city, but no one made advances to Miss Helen Hyacinthia Zone. She grew impatient, pouted, scolded, and put on airs; the loungers about her understood it, but did not stir an inch. It was whispered that the grocer was heavy in purse, and that his favorite daughter would be amply provided for. This set some of the hangers on, to thinking that a comfortable living might be made out of a match like this. Two young men who called themselves Louisiana merchants, but who probably were never citizens of, or inhabitants of New Orleans, made love to Hyacinthia. She favored one lover, the parents the other. After long negotiation with each other, one drew off, and the remaining one was soon accepted; it was after this stipulation was made with him who absented himself, that he who was the successful candidate should give the other one-third of all that he might receive by the bargain. The marriage was solemnized with no small parade, and it was intimated that Mr. Simcote had an uncle who was a baronet, and that Alfred Simcote was the heir to the title and estates,

and in the autumn Mrs. Simcote was to go south with her husband, to take possession of his large plantations near New Orleans; until that time Hyacinthia was invited to make her home at her father's house. This, Mr. Simcote consented to, as he did not wish to tear her from her dear mother, until such time as she should be ready to embark for the south. Mr. Simcote brought to Mr. Zone's house a great many visitors, but he did not introduce one to Mr. Zone's family. At times these gentlemen sat late at the card table, and deep imprecations were sometimes heard, as they retired, but Mrs. Zone thought it was one of the forms of fashionable life. The parlor occupied by Mrs. Simcote was strewed all around with elegantly bound novels and poems of a fashionable cast—with prints that would have suited better for a Paphian saloon, than for a parlor of honest people.—Sometimes the other daughters would speak plainly to their mother and throw out doubts of their sister's good fortune. Mr. Simcote would be gone whole weeks, absenting himself on some excuse of business. After one of the absences he returned full of money, having, as he said, been a journey to a distant city to collect monies due him: One excuse after another was given for his not repairing to the south, to see his cotton and sugar plantations, but as he was flush of money the good Mrs. Zone thought it arose from delicacy to Hyacinthia's feelings that he continued to stay with her. The family could not but remark how few of the faces of Mr. Simcote's friends were known to the merchants in the city, for they made many enquiries of New Orleans merchants about them. One gentleman told one of the young merchants lately connected with the Zone family, that Alfred Simcote, who once was distinguished in the south, had several years before been murdered and robbed, in the mountains of Spain, as he had always understood, and since he heard that his relations had administered on his estates, and sold them. Simcote's confusion when this was stated to him, was great, but recovering himself, he exclaimed, "Good God! is this the report? so much for staying from home so long. I must soon get ready to visit Louisiana, and show them that they have been deceived." He made preparations to leave at once, excusing himself from taking his wife, as he might have difficulties there, and chose not to have his dear Hyacinthia share them; but he would go, put down all these idle rumors, and return as soon as possible. He soon took passage for that state. In the course of a few months Mrs. Simcote received a letter from her husband, saying, that he was getting along with his suits of ejectments against those who had purchased his Plantations of his cousins, who came into possession of them on his supposed death. This letter was fully accredited by Mr. Zone and family, as the same vessel which brought the letter, brought him a consignment of cotton for Mrs. Simcote's benefit.

Soon after her husband commenced his voyage for the south, his friend, Mr. Trenon, was more attentive than ever to Mrs. Simcote. He took her to all public places, and his attention were noticed with pain, by the mother, and other members of the family, but upon the slightest remonstrance Mrs. Simcote rose to a towering passion, and said it was too hard to be forever annoyed by the narrow and vulgar views of her family. It must be remembered that she and her husband were people of the world, and led, instead of following, in society. She repeated all that had been told her of the freedom of manners in France and England, and the grantees of these nations were the only people to be thought of. The good mother heaved a sigh, but found she had lost all control over her daughter. The rumors increased, and on investigation were found to be true. One evening one of the gentlemen who were allied to the family, insulted Alexander Trenon, esq. at a public garden, by calling him a black-leg. It was thought a duel would follow, but the devoted friend of Hyacinthia, could not condescend to fight with a man of common standing. Mr. Zone forbade Mr. Trenon his house; but still the prescribed was seen with his friend's wife, in many parts of the city; and it was believed they had private intercourse, even in her father's house. The family were astonished at hearing nothing from Mr. Simcote for several months.

One morning it was rumored that Mr. Alexander Trenon, esq. was found stabbed to the heart, in the upper part of the city. A single blow had been struck at him with a dagger, which had reached his heart, and instantly deprived him of life. It could not have been a robber, who did the deed, for his money, watch, goldsnuff-box, and rings, were still about his person, when found by the watch. The whole affair was involved in mystery. The sober and discreet men who had become son-in-law to Mr. Zone, were above all suspicion of such a deed. The only clue they had to the discovery of the murderer was but a slight one. The victim was seen after midnight by the watchman in company with another not far

from where he fell. All the guardians of the night were examined, and one of them acknowledged that about eleven o'clock, the night the murder was perpetrated, he found a gentleman inebriated, who called upon him for assistance, and asked him to hide him in the watch-house, for a short time, and he should get over his infirmity. To the watch house he was taken. The gentleman seemed to get better soon, and was liberal with his purse, giving the officer something handsome for his trouble, and said to him, "I will doze a few minutes and then make towards home." The watchman fell into a sound sleep, and when he awoke discovered that the stranger had taken an old coat, hat and weapon, the badge of office, belonging to another. The guardian of the night awoke before one o'clock, but the gentleman had gone. At a short distance from the body of Trenon, these articles were found, and identified by the watchman; but he could not remember a single feature of the person he took with him for a short repose, but on reviewing all the circumstances, he was fully of opinion, that the drunkenness was feigned. No farther progress in discovering the assassin was made for some time.

No news was heard from Simcote for a year or more, when a ship from New Orleans, brought Mrs. Simcote letters and some drafts. She opened her letter and read it—she uttered a scream, and the mother entered the room found her daughter in convulsions. A physician was sent for, but all to no avail—Mrs. Simcote expired the next day at noon, having broken a blood vessel in her paroxysms. The father took up the letter from Simcote and read as follows:—

DEAR WIFE,—(I still will call you so, though lost to me forever.)—SHIP-BOARD.
"When this shall reach you, no trace of the wretch, once your husband, will be found on earth; my body will be in the bosom of the sea. Several days since, I fractured my leg, and mortification has taken place. I do not regret it, mourn not for me—I am not worthy of a tear. You will never know who I am, but it is but justice that I should make you acquainted with some things in my life. While a clerk in New Orleans, I became acquainted with the man who calls himself Alexander Trenon. I had spent more money than I could honestly command, and on making known my situation to him, he assisted me to make all quiet, but his apparent generosity was the lowest selfishness, for it was not long afterwards that he proposed to me to join in robbing a bank, he coaxed and threatened me, and I at last yielded. From that time we were together, as successful plunderers of the public. He gave me the name of Alfred Simcote, the name of a man he was supposed to have murdered in Spain. When we made our appearance in your city, we had hidden treasures in New Orleans and in the West Indies. When I first saw you, I was pleased with you, and my intentions were honorable, as far as such a man's intention could be honorable. I honestly intended to make you my wife, and to shake off Trenon, and settle down as a domestic man. This Trenon opposed, called me a fool; but finding my determination fixed, waved the subject. He intended to make you his victim at first, and never ceased his machinations until he had ruined us both. When I left you to go to New Orleans, to dispose of some hidden treasure, with my part of it I purchased cotton, which I shipped to your father, and his part was transmitted in bills on your city. He then induced me to go to the West Indies to dispose of some concealed treasure; but when I reached the Island, I discovered that some one had been there before me, and had disposed of all I went to find. I had not been on the island two days, when I was arrested on a false suit, brought in the name of a Spaniard I had never heard of, and thrown into prison, where I remained nearly six months. When the trial came on my lawyer unravelled the whole mystery, and traced all the deceptions up to Trenon. The inducements for his villainy flashed across my mind, and I hastened home.—For nearly a fortnight I kept myself out of sight—rumours to your discredit were then afloat and I soon fathomed the whole affair—I swore a deep and bloody revenge I have had it—I saw Trenon admitted to your house, by yourself, the last night of his life—I then went to the watch-house, as was described by your papers, and obtained the dress as stated, and walked near your house until about midnight, I saw him come out. I knew one of his places of retirement, in an obscure part of the city, and saw that he directed his steps towards that quarter. I followed him with my disguise, and as he was turning a dark corner, I stopped, seized him by the collar, and struck my dagger to the heart announcing my real name as he fell. He knew me, sprung upon his feet and dropped dead. I uttered a fiendish laugh, at hearing his last groan, and left him, and on passing a street or two, threw off my disguise, and moved on in security. I was in no danger of being caught, for I did not care a straw for my fate. I had glutted my revenge. I pitied you, for I

knew that you had been prepared by a wretched education, to become an easy prey to such a designing villain as Trenon. I pitied your mother, because it was her affection and bounty that placed you in the power of such an adventurer as I was. Your mind was light and vitiated when we met, and I was a fool for leaving you a moment, if I expected security and happiness. The unkindest cut I felt, of all the agony, was from hearing of your lamentations at the death of Trenon. I hope after you have shed tears for your seducer, that you will shed none for me; for whatever have been my sins, I was kind and indulgent to you, and was trying to make myself and you better.—However long you may live, you can never enter society again. In truth, you never were in society; you treated with contempt your own family, and never reached the fashionable world, you so strongly desired to join. I feel happy in the thought that I have left you sufficient property to keep you from want.—Never think of me again, but set about purifying your own mind, and preparing yourself to sustain with fortitude the disgrace you cannot shun.

"There were times in our lives, when I was on the point of drawing the veil from all the mystery which surrounded us, and of making a full disclosure of every thing, and of going with you into retirement, and of struggling together to be happy in a humble situation; but I had not the moral courage sufficient for the task, or I thought you were so wedded to the meretricious state you were in, that nothing could reclaim you. Your mother too, in the main, a good woman, had become so poisoned with the sound of fashionable life, that she would not have aided the determination. My heart was swollen almost to bursting, to think how wretchedly you were deceived. That elegant Erskine Russell, who boasted of being related to the duke of Bedford whose exquisite taste in dress you so much admired, is one of the greatest villains in the world. He has been in various situations—a servant to a gentleman upon his travels—a head waiter at a hotel—a notorious gambler—a keeper of a gambling house—a jockey on the turf among the fashionables—and a highwayman within twenty-four hours. He has been sent to Botany bay, and escaped to the United States, "the asylum of oppressed humanity," and the rendezvous or last refuge of every scoundrel under heaven. He keeps a list of all the females he has ruined, and shows the address of every one of them, and his circle of infamous wretches every time they have a revel. Still his language before females has all the scrupulous delicacy of concealed vice, conveyed in subdued and softened tones, always fascinating to every ear; but hear him among his diabolical associates, and a more libidinous, foul-mouthed blasphemer does not exist among men. His splendid appearance is supported in your city, by frauds and shifts of which he is the main spring. I dare say he is now moving in the higher circles of society, a star in the fashionable world.

"That quiet German, Gaspar Heideburg, who won so much money from you, is not a whit behind Russell, as a knave. He has had a good education, but his manners have not received much polish, and he plays a secondary part to Russell, who is the chief of the banditti. His chief ingenuity is in making keys to unlock banks, and other repositories of money, and also in preparing chemical ingredients to assist in altering and counterfeiting bills for distribution through the country. These arch fiends have many of our own countrymen in training, through the medium of agents. The minor agents have but little to do with the leaders, and they have no means of betraying them, if they were so disposed. This secret agency pervades every part of the United States, and while some of the awkward and ignorant of the conspirators are caught and punished, their leaders are moving on in the most fashionable circles in thronged cities.

"It makes my heart bleed to think what your good father has suffered. He is an honest, good man. Follow his advice in all things. Give him the charge of your property, and live no where but under his roof. Never upbraid your mother for her mistakes; they were errors of the judgment, not of the heart. Take this advice as from one who once cherished as much affection for you as any one could for a woman so volatile, vain, capricious, and so full of spurious sentiment. If I could have lived to have reformed myself, I might have reformed you; but, alas, it is all over. I am calm, and destitute of pain; but the mortification is approaching my vitals, and in a few hours all will be over with me. Both of us have been drawn from the paths of virtue by one of the greatest villains in the world, but he now festers in his shroud. He owed me his life, and I took it: I wish for no casuist to settle this for me.—Farewell.

A. SIMCOTE.
Mr. Zone, read the letter in the room which contained his daughter's corpse, and instantly gathered up her splendidly bound books, novels, poems, etc., with